REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the present application in view of the reasons that follow.

A detailed listing of all claims that are, or were, in the application, irrespective of whether the claim(s) remain under examination in the application, is presented, with an appropriate defined status identifier. Claims 1-2, 4-13, and 15-20 remain pending in this application.

Applicants request favorable reconsideration of this application in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks. Of claims 1, 2, 4-13, and 15-20 that were pending in the application, claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 8-10, and 12 were rejected in the Office Action. Applicants appreciate the continued allowance of claims 6, 7, 11, 13, and 15-20. By way of this Amendment, no claims have been amended. Accordingly, claims 1, 2, 4-13, and 15-20 remain pending for further consideration.

Statement of Substance of Interview

Applicants appreciate the courtesies extended to their representative during an interview conducted on January 3, 2007. During the interview, Applicants' representative explained how the claims 1, 4, and 9 each recited claim limitations that were not disclosed or suggested by the prior art references cited by the Examiner whether considered singly or in combination.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants appreciate the indication of the allowance of claims 6-7, 11, 13, and 15-20.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

On page 2 of the Office Action, claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 8-10, and 12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Morisawa et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,306,057) in view of Manaka (U.S. Patent No. 6,434,928).

A. Claim 1

Claim 1 recites that a drive apparatus for a hybrid vehicle comprises an internal combustion engine, a damper connected on one side thereof to a rear of the engine, a motor-

generator connected on one side thereof to another side of the damper, the motor generator being capable of starting the engine, a magnetic clutch connected on one side thereof to another side of the motor-generator, the magnetic clutch being configured to engage by electromagnetic force, a transmission connected to the internal combustion engine via the damper, the motor-generator, and the clutch, a starter motor connected to the damper, the starter motor being capable of starting the engine, and a magnetic dividing wall that is disposed between the motor-generator and the magnetic clutch.

In the rejection, the Examiner stated that:

> Morisawa et al. also disclose a dividing wall (82) that is disposed between the motor and the clutch. The dividing wall is made of metal. Therefore, it can be considered a magnetic material.
>
> * Page 2 of the Office Action

As will be explained herein, Applicants respectfully disagree with the assertion that Morisawa discloses or suggest that the dividing wall 82 is a magnetic dividing wall.

First of all, there is not a single mention in Morisawa of what material is used to make the dividing wall (cover) 82. The only mentions of the dividing wall 82 are exclusively in columns 17 and 18 of Morisawa, and each of those mentions, there is no disclosure or suggestion of what the dividing wall 82 is made of. Accordingly, there is no disclosure in Morisawa that the dividing wall is made of metal.

Second, even if there was a suggestion of making the dividing wall 82 out of metal, there is no disclosure or suggestion in Morisawa of making the dividing wall magnetic. One of ordinary skill in the art of vehicles and drive apparatuses would be motivated to use a nonmagnetic material such as aluminum alloy for the material of a transmission case (i.e., for cover 82). One of ordinary skill in the art would be motivated to make the cover 82 of an automatic transmission out of nonmagnetic material in order to decrease a weight of the transmission and greatly improve fuel consumption. It is also very common practice to produce a casing in this field of technology by means of aluminum-alloy die casting, and thus common to make the cover of the motor/ generator of Morisawa out of aluminum alloy.

Finally, in contrast to the recited invention, and as expressly admitted in the rejection, Morisawa fails to disclose or suggest a magnetic clutch. Rather, Morisawa only discloses using a hydraulically operated clutch. Accordingly, there is no motivation in Morisawa to

employ a magnetic material as a material of the casing integrally having the cover 82 because there is no need to shield a hydraulically operated clutch from the magnetic force of the motor/generator.

Accordingly, for all of these reasons Morisawa fails to disclose or suggest a magnetic dividing wall that is disposed between the motor-generator and the magnetic clutch, as recited in claim 1.

Even if combinable, Manaka fails to cure the deficiencies of Morisawa. Like Morisawa, Manaka fails to disclose or suggest a magnetic dividing wall that is disposed between the motor-generator and the magnetic clutch, as recited in claim 1. Accordingly, claim 1 is patentably distinguishable from the combination of Morisawa and Manaka.

B. Claims 2, 4, 5, 8-10, and 12

Claims 2, 4, 5, 8-10, and 12 are patentably distinguishable from the combination of Morisawa and Manaka by virtue of their dependence from claim 1, as well as their additional recitations.

For example, claim 4 recites that the clutch comprises a pilot clutch of small diameter which engages by electromagnetic force, a cam mechanism which changes engagement force of the pilot clutch into axial-direction thrust, and a main clutch of large diameter which is made to engage by the axial-direction thrust. In contrast to claim 4, neither Manaka patent nor Morisawa patent disclose or suggest a pilot clutch of small diameter which engages by electromagnetic force or a cam mechanism which changes engagement force of the pilot clutch into axial-direction thrust. Therefore, claim 4 further distinguishes the claimed invention from the combination of Morisawa and Manaka.

In addition, claim 9 recites that a tip end of the input shaft is extended so as to be disposed within and supported by an end of the output shaft of the engine via a bearing. For example, as shown in Fig. 5 of the present application, a tip end of the input shaft 31 is extended so as to be disposed within and supported by an end of the output shaft 73 of the engine via a bearing 74.

In contrast, Morisawa patent discloses a structure in which an end portion of an input shaft 90 is connected to a damper mechanism 92 and is never directly connected to an input shaft 80 of an engine. Therefore, Morisawa fails to disclose or suggest that a tip end of the input shaft is extended so as to be disposed within and supported by an end of the output shaft

of the engine via a bearing. Accordingly, claim 9 also further distinguishes the claimed invention from the combination of Morisawa and Manaka.

For the aforementioned reasons, claims 1, 2, 4-13, and 15-20 are now in condition for allowance. A Notice of Allowance at an early date is respectfully requested. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned if such communication would expedite the prosecution of the application.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by a check or credit card payment form being in the wrong amount, unsigned, post-dated, otherwise improper or informal or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, Applicant hereby petitions for such extension under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 and authorizes payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 19-0741.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: February 5, 2007

By _____

Customer Number: 22428
FOLEY & LARDNER LLP
3000 K Street, N.W.
Suite 500
Washington, D.C. 20007-5143
Telephone: (202) 672-5300
Facsimile: (202) 672-5399

Pavan K. Agarwal
Registration No. 40,888

Marc K. Weinstein
Registration No. 43,250

Attorneys for Applicants